

MUSIC SPARROW'S JOURNEY FROM MISFITS TO ROCKERS P.3

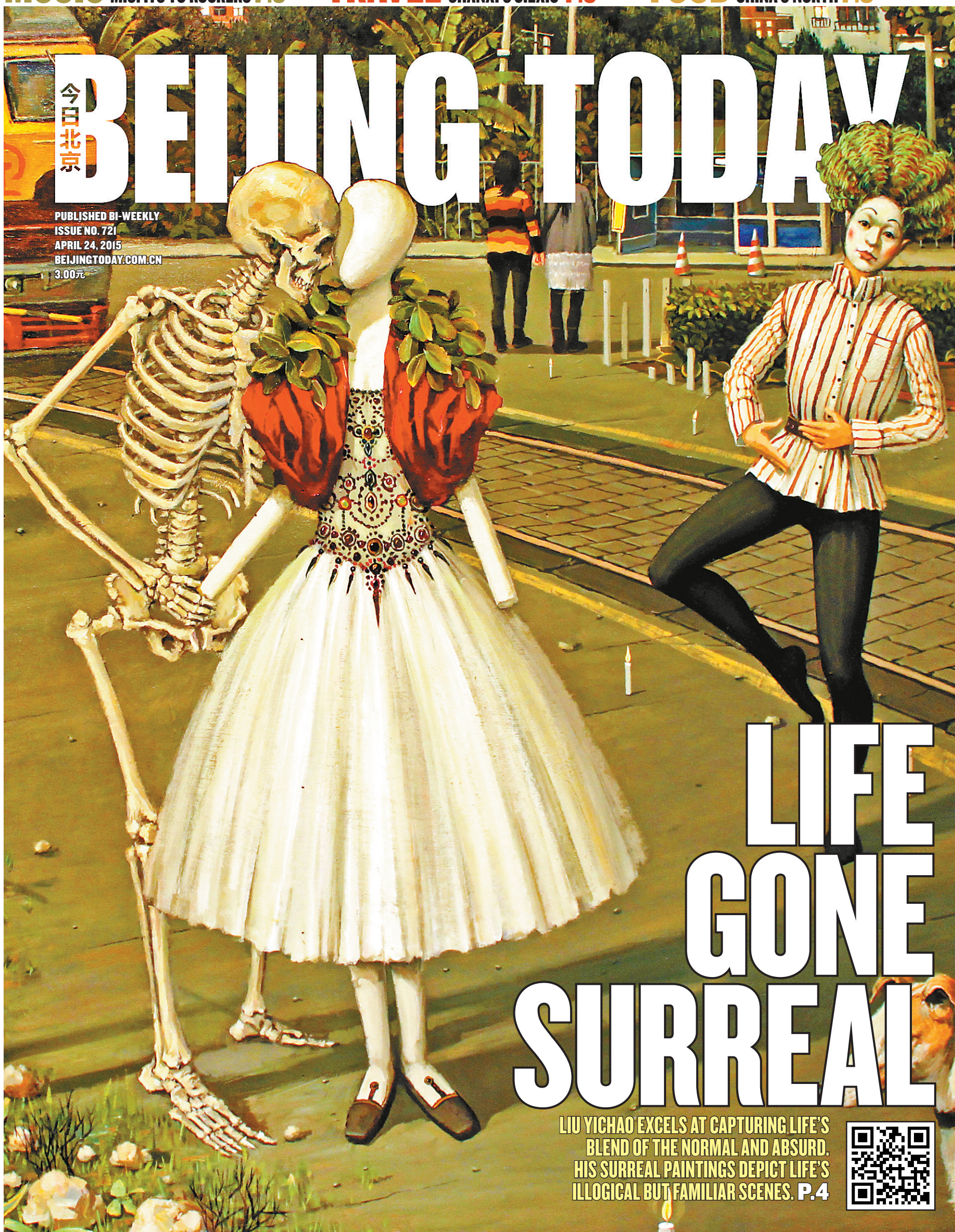
TRAVEL CASTLES & CULTURE IN SHANXI'S JIEXIU P.5

FOOD SWEETS DESSERTS FROM CHINA'S NORTH P.8

今日北京

BEIJING TODAY

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LIFE GONE SURREAL

LIU YICHAO EXCELS AT CAPTURING LIFE'S BLEND OF THE NORMAL AND ABSURD. HIS SURREAL PAINTINGS DEPICT LIFE'S ILLOGICAL BUT FAMILIAR SCENES. P.4



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BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

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ENTERTAINMENT

'Let's Get Married' Continues Media War on Single Women

BY WANG YAN

It's disappointing that even in 2015 society expects Chinese women to be "redeemed" in marriage and saved by their husbands. But that tired view is exactly what we see in the latest TV drama *Let's Get Married* and its same-titled film counterpart.

Screened on April 2, *Let's Get Married* is the work of director Liu Jiang. The film assembles an impressive cast of the most popular young Chinese film stars to string together four entirely unrelated stories.

If we stopped there, it would sound a lot like the British film *Love Actually*. But where *Love Actually* is heart-warming, *Let's Get Married* is without a heart.

The story is an empty recreation of Cinderella where four female characters – whether young or old, or rich or poor – are presented as inferior people who have to be rescued by the male leads.

Ye Wenwen (Gao Yuanyuan) plays a manager at a wedding dress store and her "Mr. Right" Chen Zhenxuan (Jiang Wu) is a talented dress designer who specializes on attire for second weddings.

When Ye sinks into despair at the sight of her ex and his new girl, Chen sweeps in to rescue her. In one scene, when the new girl forces Ye to drink with her at her wedding, Ye faints and Chen zooms in to carry her away.

Exactly what is the likelihood that your ex-boyfriend will book his new bride's wedding dress at your store, and that you would actually swoon from a single drink? That's what viewers are being asked to swallow, and it's neither convincing nor romantic.

The second love story between Wen Yi (Guo Biting) and Li Xiang (Li Chen) fares little better.

Wen is a violinist who goes to Italy for a violin competition where she meets Li Xiang, a "promising" art student. Wen is upset about losing the competition, and Li, seems to have been created purely to belittle her understanding of art. He takes her to see street artists and says, "This is real art; this is a part of their life."

Will someone who has studied violin for 10 years

really be enlightened by such a cliché scene? The romance isn't any more believable, with forced flirting and awkward hikes that attempt to sell the audience on the idea that Wen's fling is strong enough to shake a seven-year romance and engagement.

Gu Xiaolei (Chen Yihan) in the third part is presented as a doe-eyes marriage maniac with no goal other than to get a ring on the finger of her handsome co-pilot boyfriend Lin Xiao (Zhen Kai).

Tian Haixin (Liu Tao) is the only female character designed as more successful than her male counterpart. Of course, that means her character has to be a stereotypical businesswoman with anger management problems.

While most viewers lashed out at the movie for its unabashed chauvinism, there were a few who found it touching.

If we completely ignore the plot, we can find a few sweet moments when Lin Xiao embraces his girl while she is crying. But these sweet moments last no more than 5 seconds and are constantly interrupted by bad editing.

In the end, *Let's Get Married* stands as another entry in the Chinese media's 2015 War on Single Women that began with the Spring Festival Gala.

The unpopular fact is that there are 33 million more men than women in China. With that kind of demand, China's women might be staying single for a reason.

It's about time that China's filmmakers "man up" and explore why. ■
(Wang Yan is an intern at Beijing Today)



Bailuyuan the Teaches Tradition Through a Shaanxi Family

BY DIAO DIAO

Stories of China's northwestern interior resonate surprisingly well with readers across the country. *Bai Lu Yuan*, first published in 1992, tells a similar story to the ever-popular tale of *The Jade King*.

Set in Shaanxi province and penned by a native, the story comes 40 years after writer Chen Zhonghe's maiden work.

Bai Lu Yuan tells the complicated relationship between three generations of the Bai and Lu families on the Guanzhong Plain of Shaanxi province.

Chen's story continues a trend of introspective fiction that began in the 1980s. The book's timeline begins with the collapse of imperial China, continues through an era of warlords as the people of Bailu

County fall prey to banditry while communists and nationalists struggle for control of the country.

The changes in society itself hint at the fate of Bailu County. Each generation is faced with its own choice, and the story draws to a tragic close that involves death, madness, disability and disappearances.

Although it's considered a realist work, *Bai Lu Yuan* diverges from the tales of revolutionary realism that emphasize political attitudes and extreme characters. It focuses on its powerfully diverse cast and the stories and history that bind them together and shape their actions.

The book does not preach or attempt to explain history, nor does it merely offer a

few decontextualized vignettes. The conflicts and plot points are all carefully crafted to show Chen's view of traditional culture.

Famous commentator Bai Ye said that *Bai Lu Yuan* includes all the thought of Chinese literature in a new era. You Yuming, a Chinese writer, said the story also incorporates elements of magic realism from Latin America.

Scholar Zheng Wanpeng said *Bai Lu Yuan* is only the second book to capture the Chinese ethnic spirit after Lao She's famous *Four Generations*.

But not all reviews have been so kind. Some have noted that *Bai Lu Yuan* paints a Utopian picture of rural life and ignore the effects of the May 4th Movement of 1919. ■



MUSIC



SPARROW: Beyond the Rainbow Mountain

BY DIAO DIAO



If you ask post rock a fan to name Beijing's finest band, their answer will be one word: Sparrow.

Founded in 2008, Sparrow had a rocky start when several of its core members left the band due to personal issues. Nevertheless, it took the indie scene by storm in 2012 with the release of *Rainbow Mountain*, its groundbreaking first album.

The group abruptly cut off its touring plans and took a yearlong break before returning with its complete original lineup.

But even though Sparrow is foremost among Beijing's post rock scene, their shining performances and intricately woven songs hide years of hardship.

Guitarists Guo Feng and Liu Jia, drummer Lü Nan and bassist Huang Jiyang share more than a love of instrumental rock: they share academic failure.

The four found an escape from a world of disappointed parents, finger-wagging teachers and endless tests in music. It was a world where misfits could fit in.

"It's only in music that I could find myself," says Lü, the drummer. Upset with his test scores and his parents' scornful

discussions about his future, Lü turned to the drums. Today he is a professional drum teacher.

For Liu and Huang, school was battle. Literally. The two were detained for brawling on multiple occasions and Huang recalls being forced to pay compensation to another boy he had battered.

"I was scared. I think I was looking for something that could make me focus," Huang says.

The two continued cutting class and fighting until graduation, when they began to study the strings. Their experiences living as real black sheep left them with ample ammunition for crafting songs that leave an impression on their listeners.

But rather than looking at their creations as art, the four picture post rock as a canvas that allows its listeners to project their own imagination.

"Sometimes we hear the audience singing made up words based on our songs. They describe unforgettable moments in their past. I think that's what really makes post rock so attractive," Lü says.

But while the band has won plenty

of followers outside China, their work remains largely unknown outside the domestic indie scene.

Among all its compositions on its 2010 EP and 2012 album, Sparrow recommends the titular "Rainbow Mountain." The story of the song's development is the story of the band's shift into professional composition.

"We invited our old friend Zhang Xiaohao, the producer for Qu Wanting, to listen to the demo version of our song during a rehearsal. He was hooked and spent the whole afternoon working with us and getting us to add other instruments until the song sounded totally different," he says. "We even joked that it sounded like it could be used in a Hollywood film."

Although their work earns little money, the four remain bound by their personal experiences while they work on *Sightseeing Person*, their new EP due in June. The album's release will include a seven-city tour and new music video.

"We may be poor now, but from our fans and our music we think we will have a great future," Lü says. ■

site.douban.com/sparrow/
weibo.com/sparrowband/

LIVE SHOW ROUNDUP

Beijing boasts one of the world's most vibrant indie music scenes. Support our local artists with a trip to one of this week's live performances!

Bloody Woods @ Mako Live

Bloody Woods is a neo-folk musical product by indie artists Bai Shui and Gu Dao from Sichuan province. Their songs blend European folk and medieval music. The group's EP releases include *Women in the Hole* (2006), *Apocalypse of the Sound* (2007) and *Colour* (2009).

April 25, 8:30-10:30 pm
36 Guangqu Lu, Chaoyang
60 yuan (pre sale), 80 yuan (at door)

Song Yuzhe @ Post Mountain

Song Yuzhe has been touring China's farming communities with his own brand of folk. His recently published album "Duangeji," includes many poems, folk verse and narratives about his experiences.

April 25, 8:30-10 pm
1 Xiangheyuanlu, MOMA Art zone T8, Dongcheng
80 yuan (pre sale), 100 yuan (at door)

Rush Hour @ MAO Live House

Rush Hour has a six-year history in Beijing. This is the seventh concert inviting both old and new bands. The lineup includes A-Z, Chaos Kills the Pain, Collision Dreamer, Multi-Ego, Saving Molly, Stabbing and The Reason.

April 25, 8:30-11:30 pm
111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng
60 yuan (pre sale), 80 yuan (at door)



张艺德 & 新专辑《令人愉悦的忧伤》
北京城内巡演—蓝溪站



04月25日 周六
21:30-23:30
现场60元
西城区旧鼓楼大街183号

Zhang Yide @ Lanxi Bar

In spite of her masculine name, Zhang Yide is a timid girl. Zhang loves rock but sings folk. Her new album *Sentimentality Makes Us Happy* is being released during this performance at Lanxi Bar.

April 25, 9:30-11:30 pm
183 Jiugulou Dajie, Xicheng
40 yuan (pre sale), 50 yuan (at door)



Photos by Sparrow



ARTISTS



Delight



Pervaded



She

Life is a complex topic that blends the normal and the absurd in often disorienting combinations. That mystery and confusion inspires Liu Yichao, a 25-year old artist. His paintings combine weird creatures and narrative scenes to invite the viewer into an illogical but familiar place.

"Artists born in earlier generations often name ancient paintings as their favorites because these survived China's cultural and social upheavals. But speaking for myself, my art is inspired by childhood memories, personal experience and the way I see the world," Liu says.

Born in Huizhou, a humid coastal city of Guangdong province, Liu spent most of his childhood catching fish and playing in the subtropical forests. Although he never studied art until middle school, his childhood experiences significantly shaped his artistic language.

In *Drama*, his ongoing series, Liu depicts a clown swimming in a lush broad-leaved forest. Created using different shades of green, the image gives a strong sense of freshness and freedom.

"I'm a nostalgic person, and many of my works are related to my experiences. My childhood environment lets me appreciate sea life. The freedom of marine fish is what I long for the most," Liu says.

That nostalgia can also be found in *Big Cat and His Toy*, a 2013 painting. In the picture, Liu presents himself as a boy with a cat face who sits in front of a fish-shaped boat. Although the imagery appears surreal at first glance, closer examination conveys a sense of loneliness and isolation.

It's nothing new for young artists to feel confused and anxious while groping for truth in society, but Liu does an impeccable job of translating this collective uncertainty into his own artistic language. His personal emotions shine through in

each work.

In *Sorrows* (featured on cover), Liu depicts a love triangle between a skeleton, a mannequin and a clown. The clown's face is so vivid that viewers can feel his disappointment and the pain of losing his lover. By contrast, *Happiness* shows a sweet mood in which a girl dances to the rhythm of a drum-headed musician. Although there are many weird elements in these works, Liu's warm tones make the pictures unexpectedly reasonable.

That atmosphere has continued in Liu's work since graduation. Since finishing his studies at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2013, his paintings have grown ever more anxious.

In *Playing with Fires* in 2014, Liu captures a scene of five cigarettes surrounding a burning bonfire in a quiet park. The anthropomorphized cigarettes have a curving appearance that leaves the viewer space to imagine.

"When I painted that picture, I had just graduated from school and was confused about the future. Then I started to smoke and thought the nicotine would help kill the pain. I was like a boy playing with fire to escape from the adult world," he says.

As with many young artists, the pain Liu expresses through his work is a necessary step for growing up. But as an artist who regards art as an ideal, the only thing he can do is hang on and wait for change in a seemingly static state, just like the plants in his pictures.

"I appreciate the growing process of plants. They develop in a static state, which seems a bit like my personality," Liu says.

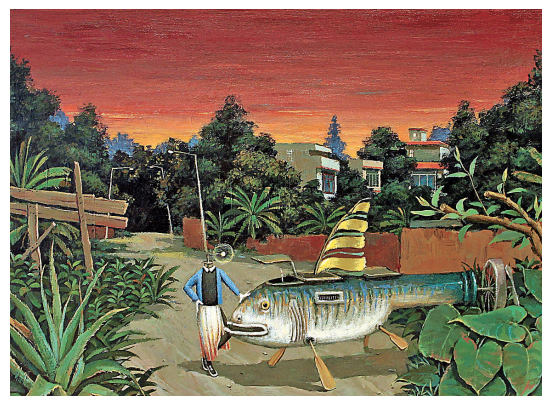
"It's hard to make a living as a young and unknown artist. But I still find satisfaction and pleasure every time I finish a new work. Staying optimistic and sticking to our dreams is essential." ■

artand.cn/4rg0vi



Intimacy

Photos by Liu Yichao

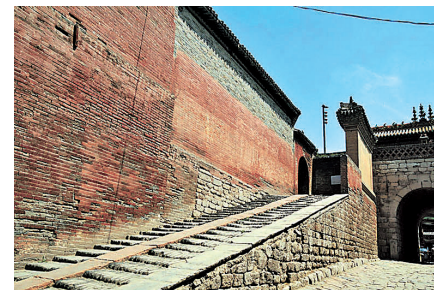


Fisherman in the South



Drama 2

A TRAVEL



Photos by mafengwo & baidu.com

Castles and Culture in Shanxi's Jiexiu

BY WANG LINGXIAO

Jiexiu in Shanxi province is famous for being the hometown of three of China's wisest men: Jie Zitui of the Spring and Autumn Period, Guo Linzong of the Eastern Han Dynasty and Wen Yanbo of the Northern Song Dynasty. It's also the site of the annual Cold Food Festival. If you're eager to escape the busy capital and step back in time, Jiexiu's cultural wonders and historic relics can be a great trip.

Day 1:

Cold Food Festival on Mianshan Mountain

The Cold Food Festival is usually held the day before the Qingming Festival. It's also a day on which cooking is traditionally forbidden. The annual event takes place on Mianshan Mountain.

The festival has its origins in the tragic story of Jie Zitui, an official from the state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn Period.

Before he was crowned King Wengong of Jin (671 - 628 BC), the young Chong'er spent 19 years as a fugitive. One time when he almost starved to death, his servant Jie cut a chunk of muscle out of his own leg to feed his master.

After becoming king, Chong'er forgot the man who saved his life and left the maimed Jie to live in seclusion with his aging mother on Mianshan Mountain. Chong'er came to regret his decision and tried to force Jie to accept a government position. When the slighted man refused, Chong'er set fire to three sides of the mountain to force him out.

Ultimately, Jie and his mother were burned alive.

In memory of Jie's tragic end, fires were forbidden on the mountain and the Cold Food Festival was born.

The 70-meter cliff offers an astonishing view. There are two iron chains that visitors can use to climb up the side of the mountain. If you are lucky, you might get to see the hanging bells of the cliff.

Mianshan Mountain is also famous for the Buddhist statues of the Zhengguo Temple. The statues were created to entomb the bodies of actual monks.

- Xindi Village, Jiexiu County, Jinzhong District, Shanxi Province
- 💎 160 yuan (tickets and transportation)
- 🕒 7 am - 6 pm

Day 2:

Zhangbi Ancient Castle

With cultural relics dating back to the Xia dynasty (2146 - 1675 BC), tunnels dug during the Sui and Tang (581 - 907) dynasties, tombs from the Jin dynasty (1115 - 1234) and dwellings during the Ming and Qing (1369 - 1644) dynasties, Zhangbi Ancient Castle is the only ancient Chinese castle to have seen both military and civilian use.

The site has not been overly commercialized and still appeals to both the common tourists and photography lovers.

The most impressive things are its underground tunnels with managers, granaries, soldiers' barracks and facilities for execution. But precisely who dug these tunnels and why remains a major question for Chinese archeologists.

- Zhangbi Village, Longfeng Town, Jiexiu County, Jinzhong District, Shanxi Province
- 💎 60 yuan
- 🕒 8 am - 5 pm

Day 3:

Multiple Religions: Xianshen Tower and Houtu Temple

Xianshen Tower is one of the four famous towers in Shanxi. Wen Yanbo, a well-known official in the Northern Song Dynasty, dedicated it to the religion of Zoroastrianism, which arrived in China from Persia around AD 500.

Ming Dynasty rulers banned Zoroastrianism and had the statues in the tower replaced with icons of Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, the historic heroes from the novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

Nevertheless, the unusual Zoroastrianism architecture remains.

The nearby Houtu Temple follows the Quanzhen Sect of Taoism. Built before the Southern Dynasties, the temple is dedicated to the Goddess of Earth. It has one of the finest

collections of glaze art in the country.

- Xianshen Tower: Shunchen Street, Beiguan, Jiexiu County, Jinzhong District, Shanxi Province.
- Houtu Temple: 99 Miaod2i Street, Jiexiu County, Jinzhong District, Shanxi Province.
- 💎 Free for Xianshen Tower; 20 yuan for Houtu Temple
- 🕒 8:30 am - 6 pm for both

The most famous food in Jiexiu is Zhanpianze. The colorful noodles are made from vegetables and grains such as carrot and millet. With eight kinds of sauce to pick from they make an impressive breakfast. ■
(Wang Lingxiao is an intern at Beijing Today)

Getting There:

🚗 Take train D2001, D2003 or G609 from Beijing West Railway Station to Jiexiu East Station. Switch to the direct bus from Jiexiu East Railway Station to Jiexiu Bus Station. Buses connect Mianshan Mountain and Zhangbi Ancient Castle from 6 am to 8 pm. A taxi from Mianshan Mountain to Zhangbi Village will take 30 minutes.

Xianshen Tower and Houtu Temple are both in the center of Jiexiu. You can take a taxi to either from your hotel. It's a 15-minute walk between the temples.

ETCETERA

Shopping and Foreign Names

BY DIAO DIAO

Chà Píng

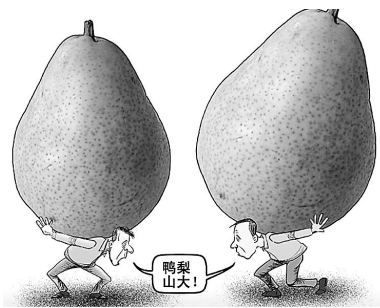
Chà píng (差评) is a term to express dissatisfaction or disappointment.

The phrase is borrowed from online shopping lingo. Buyers are usually asked to leave feedback for items after receiving them. On most shopping platforms the options are hǎo píng, zhōng píng and chà píng, standing for good, fair and bad.

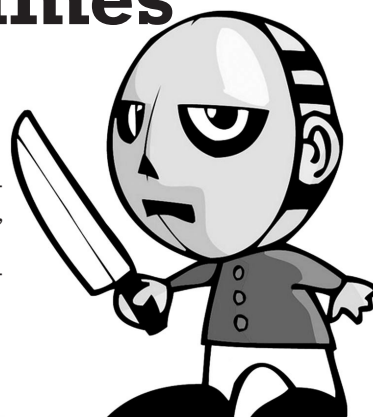
Few buyers leave negative feedback unless an item is truly awful. With more people shopping online, chà píng has become a common way to describe any disappointment.

Yā Lí Shān Dà

Yā Lí Shān Dà (压梨山大), derived from a Chinese rendering of the name "Alexander," slaps together the words for pear and mountain.



Unsurprisingly, the meaning has little to do with what's actually written. The yā lí is a homonym for another word meaning pressure. When facing a lot of work or big tasks, a lot of people say "I am Alexander," or "I Yā Lí Shān Dà," to joke about their situation.



Hé Qì Liáo

Hé qì liáo (何弃疗), is an abbreviation of "Wèihé fāngqì zhìliáo?" meaning "Why did you give up treatment?" The phrase is used to express sarcasm and irony between friends when someone is doing something stupid or behaving like a nerd or idiot. ■

Ask Beijing Today

"Ask Beijing Today" is our weekly column that attempts to make life in China less confusing.

You can email your own questions to ask@beijingtoday.com.cn.

Q. I am living in Norway, but I will move to Beijing in the summer. What products and services should I expect to miss from my home country? I know I will have to stock up on Body Shop products.

A. Good chocolate. If you can sustain the likes of "Lindt" and other commercial brands then they will be readily available. You can also find Belgian brands such as

Godiva. As for stocking up on Body Shop products, you can still find them in Hong Kong. You can always make a weekend down south to restock from time to time. Other than that, you will just have to learn to adapt to what is locally available.

Q. I have two small pet rabbits. One is sick, so I took it to a local veterinarian. The veterinarian prescribed some medicine, but the rabbit won't eat the tablets. Do you have any good suggestions?

A. It is difficult to feed rabbits medicine because they refuse to eat anything they do

not like. If you force them they will just throw it up later. Try chopping the tablet up and diluting it in your pet's drinking water.

Q. Do you know of any community service or volunteer opportunities in Beijing? Something like helping out in orphanages or looking after disabled children.

A. There are many volunteer activities in town. Go to ngocn.net's volunteer recruitment page, where there's a lot of information about available volunteer work, from helping with English translation to teaching soccer to young migrants. ■



WEEKLY TANGO

我好孤独

I

我好孤独

one

我也好孤独

a

我们在一起就不孤独了

I

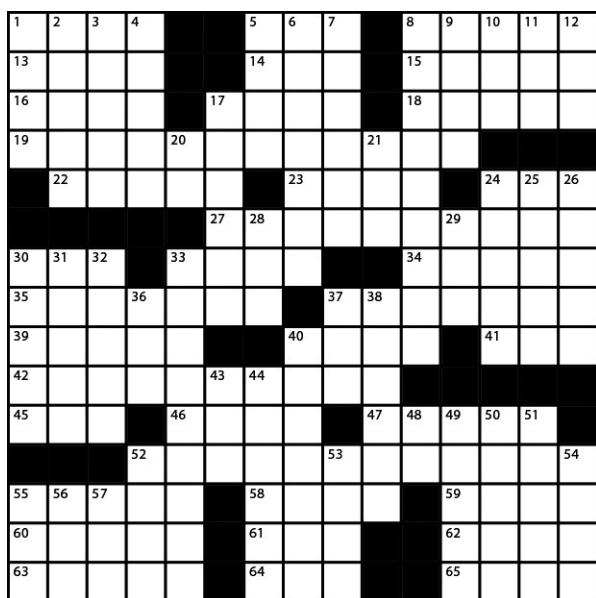
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TANGO

Tango studies at Tsinghua University's Academy of Art and Design.
For more comics, follow his Sina Weibo feed at tangocartoon.com.

THE BEIJING TODAY CROSSWORD



BY SU DERUI

Across

1. Womanizer
5. Sign of spring

8. Open, as a cage
13. Celebrity
14. Black cuckoo
15. Ruckus
16. Father

17. Turkish honorific
18. Performed, to the bard
19. Like James Gordon of Batman
22. Valentine, e.g.
23. Nicholas or Alexander
24. The Holy —
27. Mutual
30. Rice Krispies sound
33. Trig function
34. Wane
35. Sinister stare
37. Type of ray
39. Athenian lawgiver
40. Blackthorn fruit
41. Explosive stuff
42. Iron Buddha tea
45. Roulette bet
46. Exposed
47. Sarcastic taunts
52. Determined or resolute
55. Killer whales
58. Wager
59. Dandy
60. Student
61. Old soap ingredient

62. Gush
63. Visibly sad
64. Rapsallion
65. Turner and others

Down

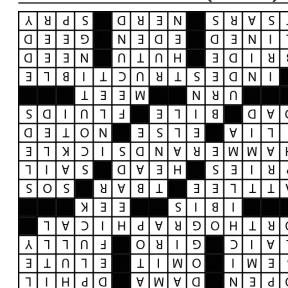
1. Computer architecture acronym
2. Farewell
3. Yogurt-based Indian stew
4. Varnish resin
5. Shoppers' aids
6. Disconnect
7. Super losers
8. Review unfairly
9. Dark film genre
10. Beseech
11. Beast of burden
12. Steep
17. Off the mark
20. Stylish
21. Siesta
24. Meager
25. Dine at home
26. Choose
28. Compass reading
29. Kimono sash
30. Basil-based sauce
31. Egg-shaped
32. Made a heap
33. Flimsily
36. Record
37. Fatima's husband
38. Chinese porridge
40. Thesaurus listing
43. Foolish mo.
44. Katmandu native
48. In that case
49. Popped
50. Skip town
51. Twisted
52. Couple
53. Dance move
54. Evergreen shrubs
55. Pick
56. Regret bitterly
57. Auditor, for short

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Q CLASSIFIEDS

DINING



Northeast Feast at the St. Regis Beijing

The St. Regis Beijing will present north-eastern culinary delights for St. Regis connoisseurs through April 30 at the Celestial Court.

China's northeastern culinary tradition has its roots in the city of Shenyang. Many of the dishes are a Manchu take on Shandong province specialties that give a new aroma and taste to Chinese classics. The dishes are characterized by strong flavors, salt and oil. Many of the dishes appear to be humble, home-style creations that nevertheless require a careful balance of taste and texture.

Signature dishes include deep-fried, pork, braised beef with small potatoes, braised pork spare ribs with snap beans and marinated soybeans with clear noodles.

⌚ 11:30 am - 10 pm, April 30
 📍 Celestial Court, 2/F, St Regis Hotel, 21 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang
 ☎ (010) 6460 6688 ext 2460/2462

MUSIC



Ember Swift

Canadian artist Ember Swift is a touring musician and songwriter and the founder of independent label Few'll Ignite Sound. Originally from Toronto, Swift has spent the past few years making her home in the magnetic city of Beijing. Her musical styles include jazz, gypsy, rock, funk, pop, folk and blues.

Since the release of her 2011 album *11:11*, Swift and her husband, Guo Jian (lead singer of Long Shen Dao), have welcomed two children into their family. In

January 2012, Swift gave birth to their daughter and in December of 2013, another baby arrived, this time a boy.

In 2014, the "Super Diva" reality show on Dragon TV invited Swift to participate. She went straight to the finals, finishing 3rd nationally.

⌚ 9:30 - 12 pm on April 25
 📍 Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiadaokou Nandajie, Dongcheng
 💰 50 yuan
 ☎ (010) 6401 5269

PETER MURCHISON & RANDY ABEL

COUNTRY BLUES EXPERIENCE
 SAT 25 APRIL - 10PM - FREE



FUBAR LIVE HOUSE
 BEIJING'S ORIGINAL SPEAK EASY SINCE 2009
 INSIDE EAST GATE OF WORKERS STADIUM
 LEFT & SOUTH 100M
 (NEXT TO #10 STADIUM STAIRWELL)
 WWW.FUBARLIVEHOUSE

Peter Murchison & Randy Abel: Country Blues

Come and experience a special blend of country blues as FUBAR Live House features two of Beijing's best-known expat blues specialists.

Peter Murchison (of Zhenren Band) and Randy Abel (of Randy Abel Stable) team up for an evening of great music that will fill your brain, heart and soul.

Murchison's music is a blend of blues, bluegrass and folk - but mostly old, old blues. His fingerpicking style is crisp and driving when he beats out the tunes of the '20s, '30s and '40s by Mississippi John Hurt, Gary Davis and Blind Blake.

⌚ 10 pm - 2 am, April 25
 📍 Fubar, Workers Stadium East Gate, Chaoyang (on the right behind Stadium Dog)
 ☎ (010) 6593 8227
 ✉ info@beijingfubar.com
 🌐 fubarlivehouse.com

TRAVEL



Jiankou West Great Wall to Zhuanghu Village Camping

The Jiankou Great Wall camping trip is

perfect for hikers who love photography. The vistas from the top of this well-preserved Wild Great Wall are majestic. It is an 8-kilometer hike with a total ascent of 600 meters. You'll need a fair bit of energy to make it to the top.

This Jiankou Great Wall hike is immediately amazing. There is a beautiful spring only 100 meters from Xiangshuihu, after which the Great Wall drops down into Wangquan Valley and climbs back out on an almost vertical ascent. Hikers will follow a trail up the mountain for about 1 hour until they reach the second beacon tower.

As the hike continues atop the Great Wall, hikers can enjoy fantastic views of some famous great sights such as the Wall Bow, the Arrow Nock and the Beijing Knot.

There are seven beacon towers on this section of the wall. The best preserved are the Five-Eye Watchtower and the Jade Tower. The Jade Tower houses a heavy stone with an inscription describing the construction of this section of the wall and a list of the soldiers and officers who made it possible.

Hikers will pitch their tents just before the sixth tower and stay warm around a small campfire. After breakfast, it's time to pack up and hike down the mountain on a dirt trail. A driver will pick everyone up in the valley and cart hikers back to the city.

⌚ 9:30 am - 1 pm, April 25
 📍 Chinahiking
 💰 1,000 yuan (includes all costs)
 ☎ 15652200950
 ✉ buqunzi@gmail.com
 🌐 chinahiking.cn

SPORTS



Shaolin Kung Fu & Zen Weekend

You may be taking care of your body, but what about your heart and mind? These concerns are brought together in the philosophy of "Chan Wu," which means kung fu and Zen.

Health revitalization and preservation are essential to the study of traditional Shaolin kung fu, especially in the modern world. They are very important in the ongoing battle to counter the harmful effects of modern-day stress.

The Kung Fu Academy has designed a series of exercises for health preservation and lectures to promote ancient philosophy that can inspire wisdom. These exercises are helpful for people who suffer from back, neck and shoulders pain as a consequence of long hours in the office.

⌚ May 1 to 3
 📍 Shaolin Wugulun Kung Fu Academy, Xiangtang Village 2nd District, No. 3-6, Changping
 💰 1,500 yuan
 ☎ 18911364378
 ✉ wugulun@hotmail.com
 🌐 shaolinwugulun.org

COMMUNITY



Irish Network Night

Warm up to Beijing's Irish community at this evening social. You don't have to be Irish to join the fun: everyone is welcome to an extended happy hour that offers 30 percent off on all drinks through 10 pm.

The night is organized by Irish Network China, Beijing GAA, Beijing Celtic and Paddy O'Sheas. If you're interested in getting involved with the Irish community or its sports teams, stop by to have a word with one of their members free of charge.

⌚ 7:26 pm - 3:27 am, April 30
 📍 Paddy O'Shea's, 28 Dongzhimen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang
 ☎ (010) 6415 6389
 🌐 paddyosheasbeijing.com



May Feige Vintage Fair

The winds of spring are blowing in Beijing, and Feige Vintage Fair is just around the corner. Come and celebrate International Labor Day at the May Feige Vintage Fair!

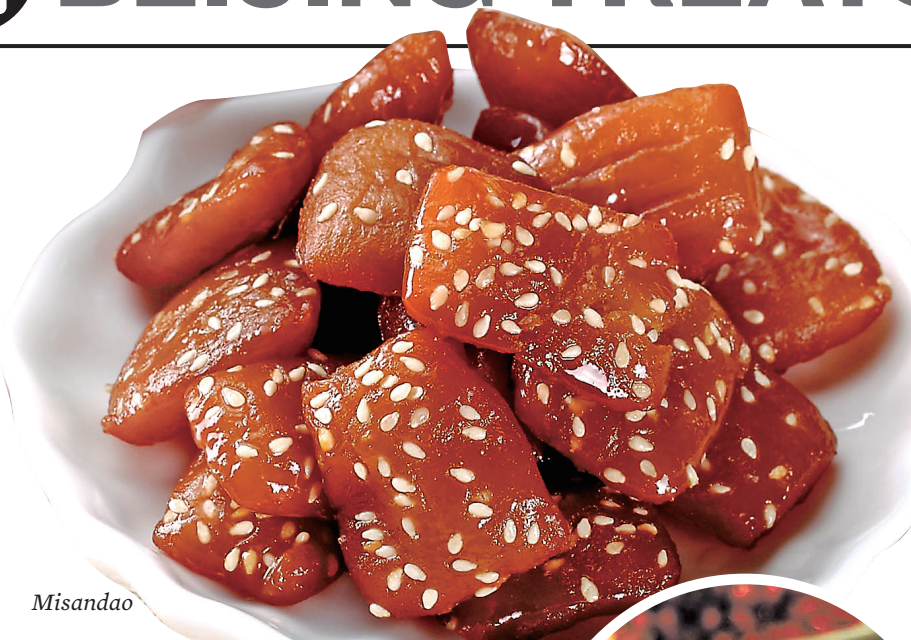
Wukesong Hi Park's basketball theme park and cultural square will be filled by happiness and joy from 1 - 9 pm every day from May 1 to 3.

The fair includes a vintage market, musical performances, foosball and dart tournaments, workshops, a children's fun zone and an array of food and beverage vendors.

⌚ 1 - 9 pm, May 1 to 3
 📍 Beijing Wukesong Hi Park, Basketball Theme Park, Wukesong, 69 Fuxing Lu, Haidian
 💰 50 yuan per day



BEIJING TREATS



Misandao



Jiangmitiao



Matuan

Sweet Snacks of the North

BY DIAO DIAO

The desserts of northern China tend to be extremely sweet – at least relative to the rest of the Chinese culinary world. Beijing's popular zhagezhi, misandao, matuan, zhagao and jiangmitiao share the common feature of being drowned or encrusted in sugar.

Zhagezhi come in soft and crispy varieties. The soft ones are cooked with vegetables, and the crispy ones are fried and sweet. All are made of bean flour, oil and brown sugar.

As for how the dish got its odd name, like many Beijing stories, this began in the palace. Servants were unable to name the dish the first time they brought it before the Empress Dowager Cixi. According to the story, she waved it off and said, "Gezhe'er," meaning put it here.

But a more likely explanation for the name is that "gezhi" just sounds a lot like a Chinese onomatopoeia for crunching.

Misandao is another snack packing a sugar shock. It was first created in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province before being adopted by the north.

The treat is made from a malt sugar produced by fermenting sorghum, rice, barley, millet, corn and starch. It's named for the three ridges on each square.

Matuan are round balls of sticky rice containing a sweet red bean paste core. Beijingers call it matuan because "round" sounds like "tuanyuan," which means reunion. They taste best when served hot, and are frequently available in temple fairs.

Zhagao is one of the most famous Hui minority foods, as well as one of Tianjin's most popular snacks. In Beijing, you can find it in stores near the Nijie mosque. The cakes are made of sticky rice and sweet rice bean paste like a matuan, but they come apart in layers of yellow, white and red after the first bite.

Jiangmitiao are hard sweet sticks made of sugar and sticky rice. Dieters beware: the innocent looking sticks are made by blending simple syrup with sticky rice flour and deep-frying the mixture. ■



Zhagao



Zhagezhi

MAKE YOUR OWN WITH THIS RECIPE

Learn to Make Guozigan

BY DIAO DIAO

Sour and sweet guozigan might be the most popular dessert served in Beijing restaurants.

The treat is made from different preserved fruits and is served in a thick, sweet and sour stock. Guozigan is believed to aid digestion and relieve thirst. It's easy to make it fresh at home.

Ingredients:

- ☐ preserved persimmons
- ☐ water
- ☐ lotus root
- ☐ osmanthus syrup
- ☐ raisins
- ☐ dried apricots

The Steps:

1. Clean the dried apricot and preserved persimmon. Soak them in water to remove any sugar that's stuck to the surface. Core the persimmon.
2. Cut the persimmon into small pieces and mix in a big bowl with the dried apricots and raisins. Add warm water and stir to thicken.
3. Peel the lotus and cut it into small pieces. Boil it in water to soften.
4. Add the lotus to the persimmon and apricot soup. Sweeten to taste with the osmanthus syrup.



Beijing's Time-Honored Yili Shop

BY DIAO DIAO

Founded in 1906, Yili is a time-honored local brand known for producing Beijing snacks and a popular line of vitamin and fruit breads found in most supermarkets.

But beyond its supermarket offering, Yili's own shops offer many other popular sweets such as milk chocolate wafers stuffed with peanut butter and sesame jam. It also makes many of the same cakes and Chinese pastries as the pastry chain Daoxiangcun. The two have been engaged in a hundred-year rivalry.

Its most popular treats with the older generation are fresh rose cakes and "lava cakes" made with layers of chocolate. For younger adults born in the 1980s, Yili's sesame paste "shrimp candy," butterballs and three-color candies are the touchstones of childhood.

In addition to its sweet foods and snacks, Yili also makes stewed meats and pickled vegetables, which sell out before noon each day.

Although it has long been confined to Beijing's city center, the chain is starting to expand with new Yili shops in other busy districts. ■



Fruit bread



Vitamin bread



Niushebing

Photos by dianping.com

Yili Shop

48 Dongsu Bei Dajie, Dongcheng
(010) 6407 9078